

Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method, comprising:
enforcing a charging policy at a network element, wherein the charging policy is to be applied to data packets reaching the network element during a packet data protocol context, the packet data protocol context comprising a plurality of data flows, with each data flow being distinguishable by a set of flow parameters, wherein said charging policy defines charging rules per flow of the plurality of flows;
observing the data packets reaching said network element, the data packets each including at least one flow parameter, wherein the at least one flow parameter includes a flow identifier, and wherein the at least one flow parameter indicates an associated flow charging policy for the flow; and
detecting at least one data flow from flow parameters included in the observed data packets;
mapping ~~each of~~ the data packets to detected data flows in accordance with the at least one flow parameter included in the respective data packet;
matching said detected data flows to an enforced charging policy; and
applying said enforced charging policy to said data flows to generate charging information.
2. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, further comprising:
~~forwarding~~ causing said generated charging information to be forwarded to a charging system of the communication network.
3. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the enforcing is performed upon start-up of the network element.
4. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the enforcing is performed upon activation of the packet data protocol context.

5. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 4, wherein the enforcing is performed dynamically during a life-time of the packet data protocol context.

6. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, further comprising: initializing data volume counters upon enforcing said charging policy.

7. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein said data flows are Internet Protocol (IP) based packet data flows, and said flow parameters comprise at least one of an IP header field, a transport header field, and an application level information.

8. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein said charging policy comprises at least one flow parameter, and at least one of a charging/accounting type, an accounting event trigger, a charging metrics, and a tariffing indication.

9. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, further comprising: creating a plurality of charging policies, each charging policy of the charging policies comprising at least one flow parameter, and at least one of a charging/accounting type, an accounting event trigger, a charging metrics, and a tariffing indication;

selecting a charging policy based on offered services and subscriber information; and
~~distributing~~ causing said selected charging policy to be distributed to at least one network element to be enforced at said at least one network element for charging of data reaching said at least one network element during a packet data protocol context.

10. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 9, wherein said charging policy is selected for a type of said network element.

11. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising a processor configured to cause the apparatus to: ~~An apparatus, comprising:~~

~~an enforcing unit configured to enforce a charging policy at a network element to be applied to data packets reaching the network element during a packet data protocol context, the packet data protocol context comprising a plurality of data flows, with each data flows of the~~

plurality of data flows being distinguishable by a set of flow parameters, wherein said charging policy defines charging rules per data flow of the plurality of flows;

~~an observation unit configured to observe said data packets reaching said network element, the data packets each including at least one flow parameter, wherein the at least one flow parameter includes a flow identifier, and wherein the at least one flow parameter indicates an associated flow charging policy for the flow;~~ and

detect at least one data flow from flow parameters included in the observed data packets;

~~a mapping unit configured to map each of the data packets to detected data flows in accordance with the at least one flow parameter included in the respective data packet;~~

~~a matching unit configured to match said detected data flows to an enforced charging policy;~~

~~an application unit configured to apply said enforced charging policy to said data flows;~~
and

~~a generation unit, responsive to said application unit, configured to generate charging information, in response to applying said enforced charging policy.~~

12. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the processor is further configured to cause the apparatus to cause further comprising: a forwarding unit configured to forward said generated charging information to be forwarded to a charging system of the communication network.

13. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the processor configured to cause the apparatus to enforce the charging policy said enforcing unit is further configured to cause the apparatus to be responsive to a start-up of the network element to perform the enforcing.

14. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the processor configured to cause the apparatus to enforce the charging policy said enforcing unit is further configured to cause the apparatus to be responsive to activation of the packet data protocol context to perform the enforcing.

15. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 14, wherein the processor configured to cause the apparatus to enforce the charging policy said enforcing unit is further configured to cause the apparatus to dynamically enforce during a life-time of the packet data protocol context.

16. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the processor is further configured to cause the apparatus to comprising: an initialization unit configured to initialize data volume counters and/or time counters responsive to enforcing said charging policy.

17. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein said data flows are Internet Protocol (IP) based packet data flows, and said flow parameters comprise at least one of an IP header field, a transport header field, and an application level information.

18. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein said charging policy comprises at least one flow parameter, and at least one of a charging/accounting type, an accounting event trigger, a charging metrics, and a tariffing indication.

19. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the processor is further configured to further comprising: a creation unit configured to create a plurality of charging policies, each charging policy of the plurality of charging policies comprising at least one flow parameter, and at least one of a charging/accounting type, an accounting event trigger, a charging metrics, and a tariffing indication;

a selection unit configured to select a charging policy based on offered services and subscriber information; and

a distribution unit configured to distribute cause said selected charging policy to be distributed to at least one network element, with the charging policy to be enforced at said at least one network element for charging of data reaching said at least one network element during a packet data protocol context.

20. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said charging policy is selected for a type of said network element.

21. (Currently Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

enforcing means configured to enforce a charging policy at a network element to be applied to data packets reaching the network element during a packet data protocol context, the packet data protocol context comprising a plurality of data flows, with each data flow of the plurality of data flows being distinguishable by a set of flow parameters, wherein said charging policy defines charging rules per data flow of the plurality of flows;

observation means configured to observe said data packets reaching said network element, the data packets each including at least one flow parameter, wherein the at least one flow parameter includes a flow identifier, and wherein the at least one flow parameter indicates an associated flow charging policy for the flow, and the observation means being further configured to detect at least one data flow from flow parameters included in the observed data packets,

mapping means configured to map each of the data packets to detected data flows in accordance with the at least one flow parameter included in the respective data packet;

matching means configured to match said detected data flows to an enforced charging policy;

application means configured to apply said enforced charging policy to said data flows;
and

generation means, responsive to said application means, configured to generate charging information.

22.-24. (Cancelled)

25. (New) The method according to claim 1, wherein observing the data packets includes observing the data packets reaching said network element, the data packets including the at least one flow parameter, the at least one flow parameter including a flow identifier and a destination address, wherein the flow identifier does not include the destination address.

26. (New) The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the processor configured to cause the apparatus to observe the data packets includes being configured to cause the apparatus

to observe the data packets reaching said network element, the data packets including the at least one flow parameter, the at least one flow parameter including a flow identifier and a destination address, wherein the flow identifier does not include the destination address.

27. (New) The apparatus according to claim 21, wherein the observation means configured to observe the data packets includes being configured to observe the data packets reaching said network element, the data packets including the at least one flow parameter, the at least one flow parameter including a flow identifier and a destination address, wherein the flow identifier does not include the destination address.